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When He Dwelt With Us

Margaret B. Downing

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THE MEMORY OF A TALE WHISPERED BY THE ANGELS

WHEN HE DWELT WITH US

MARGARET B. DOWNING

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T.C

PREFACE

This little book attempts to add nothing to the vast literature pertaining to the Natural History of the Bible. It merely sketches, and in faint outline, the fields of Judea as they looked in the days of Christ's Ministry. Modern scientific investigation has definitely identified nearly all the trees and flowers used so eloquently by the Divine Teacher, by the Prophets, the Psalmist and the Evangelists to show forth the glory of heaven and of earth. Of the growing things which were among the instruments of the Sacred Passion, we may to-day look upon their modern descendants with assured knowledge. In many instances we may raise them in our gardens. Little plots of verdure with *salix Babylonica,* weeping willow, the rue, the lily of the field which is the modern *candidum,* the rose, the

flowering almond, the mallow will delight all lovers of nature and present the Gentle Redeemer in the most appealing of human aspects.

Of the tree from which the Cross was fashioned there are many traditions. One of the most beautiful tells of our earthly mother Eve looking back with tear-dimmed eyes as she passes from Paradise, at the Tree of Life gloriously fruitful in the centre of the Garden. The Angel mercifully read her longing and plucking a golden apple he bade her not to eat but to save the seed and plant a tree from which would come the universal deliverance. This tree

> . . . "whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world and all our woe"

survived the deluge and was growing near Jerusalem when the day of Calvary approached. It is a pretty tale, worthy of the ages of faith, when it was piously accepted. But microscopic examination of the frag-

ments of the Cross scattered throughout the world in the form of relics, proves that it was made from a pine-tree. This tree alone of all known species grows in every clime where any variety of plant life is found. It is the universal tree and therefore the symbol of universal redemption. The pine was always less valued than the oak, the cypress, the lordly cedar, and therefore was used in ancient times as it is often now for gibbets and instruments of ignomy and torture.

May this little book, brief and inadequate though it may be, fill a tiny place in the stupendous literature of the Bible in awakening a love and desire to read the unwritten story of our Saviour's life, a story still to be traced in the fields and forests of Palestine.

MARGARET B. DOWNING.

I

And when He was twelve years old, they going up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the Feast,

And having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and His parents knew it not. ***Saint Luke II, 42, 43.***

AROUND the gate which led to the North rose a babel of voices. Caravans were departing and friends brought together for the Pasch were calling their farewells. In the throng Joseph and the Virgin Mother walked silent and sedately. Always tranquil and meditative the days of prayer had raised the foster-father above all earthly cares, but as they passed through the gateway he noted that the Mother gazed anxiously back to the city. As the time drew near to leave Jerusalem, Mary had seen in the Boy's eyes that look which betokened visions not granted to mortals and she felt forlorn, forgotten because she could not share the exaltation. From the high terrace of Herod's temple she had looked on the brooding city and in her heart was a sense of bereavement. The golden years were gliding by and carrying the Boy

onward to His destiny. That afternoon He had smiled lovingly into her face as she stood waiting with the sweetness of resignation flooding her soul. She turned to take His hand and draw Him to the gate where their kindred were gathered. But the far-off look still held His eyes and gently eluding her clasp, He turned back towards the temple.

"Let Him go," said the foster-father in his tone of grave authority, "He is loathe to leave. But swift of foot, He will soon come upon us on the road."

Mary made no response but hastened to join those who were to journey with them to Galilee.

When His parents had turned into the narrow way leading to the city walls, the Boy returned to the terrace and marking His way went rapidly through the streets to the gate which led to the East. During the days just passed and every year when He came to Jerusalem to keep the Feast, how often He had sought the highest por-

tico of Mount Moriah! How often He had gazed down into the garden calm and holy against the hills while the memory of a tale whispered by the angels on the first morning of creation filled His thoughts! God's breath had dispelled the mist, and earth lay revealed in her changing glory. Every flower and plant and tree ordained to play a part in that awful drama before which the sun would veil its face and the foundations of the earth tremble was known to the angels and they spoke softly of it in the inner courts of Heaven. Always He longed to see the very spot, the growing Tree, the garden, and the brook. Once He thought to make the journey with His Mother but His tender heart refused to give her anguish.

Out of the gateway into the open country, the Boy came quickly to the Garden. Judea lay clad in the vestments of spring,—glorious fulfillment of the Prophet's vision: —"I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, and the thorn, and the myrtle, and the olive-tree: I will set in the desert the fir-tree, the

elm, and the box-tree together." *

Fig trees had put forth green leaves and the blossom of the young camphors and bays made the air fragrant. The glossy foliage of the pistacia gleamed in the sun and along the hills were groves of nuts and pomegranates as in the day when Solomon had sung, "I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valleys, and to look if the vineyard had flourished, and the pomegranates budded." †

In the garden the olives bent a welcome, as though they knew Who was passing near. He remembered the dove and the sprig of olive, that emblem of peace and of divine compassion, the symbol that God's wrath was appeased and the floods of heaven gathered within bounds. He recalled that under a law more ceremonial than the patriarchal rule, the tabernacle shaded by an olive, and of the treasures promised by Jehovah to His chosen people one was an abundance of olive trees. Beyond the

* Isaias xli. 19. † Canticle of Canticles vi, 10.

garden of olives, He came to the Brook of Cedron. Flowers clustered in radiant hues, lilies, the dog rose, white and scarlet aloes, blessed sign of refreshment for the wayfarer. Almonds waved a roseate greeting and the strong odor of the ladanum mingled with the fruit-like essence of the mandrake. Along the edge of the brook the slender rushes were bending lightly and He smiled a welcome to an old and much loved friend. Little rushes, how they reminded Him of the Cave of Bethlehem and the faint light shed upon kingly visitants, pious shepherds and the compassionate people of the village. How He loved the way they twinkled in the darkness while Joseph and His Mother slept. He recalled the solemn desert by the Nile and when His foster-father had lighted the taper, His Mother had said it was like the ever-watchful Eye and the ever-guarding Love. Looking into days to come He saw fishermen's nets made of rushes and the vision came of long days and sad nights when He and these toilers of the

sea would tread beside the brook together. He beheld a funeral procession coming down from the Mount. The tapers would be made of rushes from this spot. He paused "In the covert of the reed and in the moist places, the shades cover His shadow, the willows of the brook shall compass Him about." * Here was the reed, his sceptre, whereon would be fastened the sponge with the last bitter drops. In the field beyond the brook the lowly and compassionate rue bent beneath His feet. "Woe to you, Pharisees, because you tithe mint and rue and every herb: and pass over judgment, and the charity of God," † it would be said in later times. But to-day He thought only of its mission of compassion. Rue, *ruta graveolens,* prized for its medicinal virtues was sprinkled on the floor of the courts to lessen the danger of contagion when prisoners were brought from their loathsome dungeons. When the Roman governor would wash his hands before the

* Job xl, 16, 17. † Luke ii, 42.

people the rue would be strewn about thickly and its bruised leaves yielding an aromatic perfume would be the one comfort of that sad hour.

Higher on the hills came the vineyards, "in a fruitful place." In the level spots were fields of grain joyously blended with green herbs and trees until earth seemed a bridal bower. Dog roses clambered over the naked rocks clothing them with beauty, and the wild cucumber and the gourd made dainty festoons against the sand heaps. "My beloved had a vineyard on a hill . . . and he fenced it in and picked the stones out of it and planted it with the choicest vines." * The vine, mystic in the old law, and how much more precious it was to be in the new! The Boy recalled the inspiring words of David so often repeated by His Mother as they talked of the vine together:

"Thou hast brought a vineyard out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the Gentiles and plantedst it.

* Isaias v, 1, 2.

Thou wast the guide of its journey in its sight: thou plantedst the roots thereof and it filled the land.

The shadow of it covered the hills: and the branches thereof the cedars of God.

It stretched forth its branches unto the sea, and its boughs unto the river." *

Then came the mournful words of the prophet lamenting the fate of the Chosen people.

"O vineyard of Sabama, I will weep for thee, with the mourning of Jazer: thy branches are gone over the sea, they are come even to the sea of Jazer: the robber hath rushed in upon thy harvest, and thy vintage.

Joy and gladness is taken away from Carmel, and from the land of Moab, and I have taken away the wine out of the presses, the treador of the grapes shall not sing the accustomed cheerful tune." †

* Psalms lxxix, 9, 10, 11, 12. † Jeremiah xlviii, 32-33.

He remembered too the solemn comments of Joseph on the word of Ezechiel and his rebuke of the frivolous:

"The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the teeth of the children are set on edge," and how zealously this servant of God had defended His justice but had also pointed out with tender care how much greater is His mercy:

"As I live, saith the Lord God, this parable shall be no more to you a proverb in Israel. . . .

Behold all souls are mine: as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, the same shall die.

But if the wicked do penance for all his sins, which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments and do judgment, and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die." *

Spread before Him were the grain-fields, barley in the ear, the cummin, and the rye.

* Ezechiel xviii, 3, 4, 21.

The vineyard and the wheat, the bread and the wine, blessed memorial of His mission! Here were the fig-tree and the mustard and long rows of flax bending in the passing wind. In the vista of years, He saw a boy toiling up a hill bearing five barley loaves. From the flax would be woven fine garments to serve Him last and most lovingly in the Sepulcher. Lilies of the field bloomed in the shaded places and the scarlet head of the poppy gleamed among the sheaves of the golden grain.

Higher and higher, He climbed the hills. Flowers were rarer, no sheltering trees were near; the soft radiance of the scene had faded. The fierce sun of the Levant beat down with relentless power.

But the birds were there, the timid gazelle, the little foxes, all the living things on wing and the creeping creatures in the rocks. As the slender figure toiled upward a startled thrush drowsy in an oak, circled for a moment about the tree and flew directly overhead. Then it broke into such a

pæan of song, as if its heart would burst in rapture. A happy smile played about his lips. "Stay with me, little thrush," he murmured, "until I reach the heights."

As if, in response to that prayer, myriads of other songsters joined the thrush and a joyous orchestra flew before, warbling, fluttering, making the air gay with plumage and rich with song. On the crest of the mountain, rent with wild ravines, fringed with wind-torn trees, the Boy paused to rest. Close by a clump of bushes seemed to offer shade. He drew near only to start back. They were thorn trees whose cruel spikes shone out against their shining foliage like a menace. In sombre majesty the giant buckthorn, in the years to come to be reverently known as the *Rhamnus Spina Christi* towered above them all. Near it grew the *Paliurus Acaleatus,* the Shamir of the Hebrews, elegant in flower and foliage with long pliant branches and methodical spikes. There was the box thorn known as *Lycium horridum,* the prickles of which possess such

stinging power that cruel man could invent no torture more exquisite. The mad apple and the thorn pear concealed sinister darts beneath gorgeous blooms and glowing leafage. "I will thrash your flesh with the thorns and briers of the desert," * said Gideon to the men of Succoth. Again the haughty young King Roboam, "My father beat you with whips but I will beat you with scorpions," † that is with scourges made of thorns. But along the barren rock the trailing sweet brier suggested no tragic future.

The Boy's step was beginning to falter. His eyes gazed mournfully beyond the thorns. There against a yawning precipice standing apart as though isolation had marked it from the seedling, sombre as the grave, dark as despair grew a gaunt misshapen Pine. For a moment He trembled and from the Tree, He lifted His eyes to Heaven. The sun was sinking to rest and over the mountain the golden hue was tinged

* Judges viii, 7. † III Kings xii, 11.

with the roseate color of Hope. Great heaps of clouds were banked in fleecy masses and as He gazed, the face of His Father beamed down from the glory. The air was steeped in radiance and it seemed as though all the feathered tribes of Judea had flown to the spot. They fluttered about His head and burst into a song as glorious and inspiring as when the morning stars had sung together at the dawn of creation. In that moment of exaltation, Heaven bent down to clasp this sorrowing earth and the glad oratorio thrilled upward even to the Throne.

Strengthened for the supreme moment, the Boy went forward and sinking to His knees, His arms encircled the Tree. The glory faded and the birds hushed their songs. Overcome by fatigue and the mournful journey, He closed His eyes against the vision and the tears coursed down. It was lonely on the mountain. His soul yearned for the sustaining love of His Mother even then grieving His loss. In that moment He thought with infinite tenderness of the

long line of human mothers whose little ones would stray away and be lost in a sadder, truer sense. He saw a vision of the Tree as He came down the steps of the governor's palace and as it would be on Mount Calvary.

All through the night the angels sped down the shining heights and kept watch over the Boy. The sun was beaming when He awoke. The hills looked fair in the morning, the Tree had lost its look of hideous deformity and the birds sang in its branches. His soul was serene and the future softened by His Father's promise expanded before Him. He arose and taking His way into the lower country, soon came upon a village against the hill.

A youth perhaps a year or two His elder, was standing in front of a house on the outskirts of the hamlet. He had drawn two vessels of water and had paused to rest. The Boy greeted him gravely as He had heard His foster-father salute strangers. The other returned the greeting sedately,

and mindful of the customs of the people and noting that the youth was alien and weary, bade Him drink and come within to rest. With a countenance beaming with joy, the Divine Child thanked His host and for the first time, entered the house of Lazarus at Bethania.

A girl but little more than His own age was attending to the needs of the household. With deft hands she placed before her Guest a basin of water and gave Him fair linen for the laving, all the while carolling gayly as the birds without. She told Him all about their home, that they were orphans and Lazarus was the head of the house. She had a little sister Mary, still slumbering but she would be called when they were ready for the meal. She placed before them a good portion of bread and milk and honey with some dried fruits of the fig and the vine. The Boy partook gratefully.

Lazarus waited until his Guest was refreshed before asking of His friends and why He was abroad so early. On entering,

the Boy had explained briefly that He was of Nazareth and had come with His parents to keep the Passover in the Temple.

Then as Martha's eager face was aglow and the eyes of Lazarus full of sympathy, the Visitor spoke of His life in Galilee,—of His father who was a carpenter and made yokes for oxen and plows and such simple things in wood. Now that He had grown tall and strong, He helped with the work, for His father was old and getting feeble. He told them of the fields He loved, of the woods where He delighted to roam and that He dreaded to hear the woodmen fell the trees. He spoke of the shepherds who tended their flocks on the hillsides. Often He longed to share their watches, for by night, He took pleasure in the lonely hills and the glory of Heaven and in the thought of watching over the helpless sheep exposed to many perils. He spoke of the little mountain streams, of the birds he knew and loved the best and of the turtle doves, which were His own, and of the gar-

den near the home in Nazareth. The garden indeed was very small, only a few commonplace flowers near the door and the trees were mere shrubs, but He drew water from the well and helped His Mother to tend them.

As the Boy spoke the birds flew near to listen, even the wind was hushed and nature seemed to pause. Every living thing about Bethania longed to hear the sweetest story ever told by mortal lips,—how the human Mother loved and tended her Divine Child. He told them of the lone and level sands of Egypt when because of His Mother's enemies they were compelled to fly from their own country and their own people. When at night they slept at the feet of the mighty Sphinx a spreading date palm had grown over their heads. Its branches offered refreshing shade and when they awoke in the morning, its fruit dropping into their laps had given an ample breakfast. A goat with her udder full of rich milk strayed near and they had abundance to drink.

They had journeyed on until they came to some laborer's huts where they had received a kindly welcome and remained until a vision called them back to Galilee. He said that since then, they had lived in Nazareth and He had never left the little village except to come to Jerusalem at the Passover. Then He spoke of the Holy Books. His Mother often read them to Him, especially the sayings of David, for His father and mother came of that princely line. His father was a wise man in the ways of God. He could explain what every sacred word in Holy writ should mean to those who heard.

Martha drew a deep sigh.

"My mother loved to read to us the Holy Books," she said eagerly:—"and she read them often and often. We loved to hear the prophecies about the Messiah and my mother longed so for His coming. Even little Mary, who was so young, remembers our mother's look when she would tell of the messenger whom Jehovah would send from Heaven to free His chosen people."

A radiance flushed the Boy's pale face. Some moments before He had noticed a little girl with tumbled hair and eyes still heavy with sleep, creep through the curtained door and stand rooted to the spot, drinking in his every word.

"When did your mother die?" he asked Martha, though He looked gently at the younger girl.

"O, dear Guest," Martha answered, her eyes filling with tears, "it was three years ago and the story is so sad. You who have still your mother and your father will pity us who have lost them both. But my father died long ago. Even my brother, who is the oldest, does not remember our father. Just as Lazarus was standing when he saw you coming, so was my mother standing when an old man passed by. He looked so wayworn, so lonely and so ill that my mother, who had a gentle heart, called him to tarry and refresh himself. She gave him water and food and even her pallet on which to rest. But he had come from the desert

with a fever. My mother died within a week and Lazarus too was ill and for days lay as though the hand of death had smitten him. But I prayed and wept and told the God of Israel that He could not take away our brother when our mother had been stricken because she had kept the law of charity.

"Ah! dear Guest," sobbed Martha, "You talk of God as though you had seen Him face to face and knew His heart. Is it sinful that I still grieve because my mother was taken from her little children?"

The Boy looked at her gravely. "Your mother taught you," he replied after a full moment, "that the ways of God are not to be judged by man and that His meanings are not always clear. Your mother lost her life to find it again. Her Heavenly Father called her away but in her place He will send you a Friend, One who will love and protect you all the days of your life and beyond this life until you meet her again."

Step by step from the curtained door, the

little girl crept toward the Boy. Coming before Him, she raised soft appealing eyes and asked that question which neither Lazarus nor Martha had framed.

"What is your name, dear Stranger, that we may know you when you come again?"

Then for the first time Lazarus and Martha and Mary heard that name which would evermore be for them the dearest sound on earth.

"I am called Jesus of Nazareth," he answered.

They bowed their heads reverently and whispered the prayer their mother had taught them to say in holy places. After a little, the Boy asked Lazarus whether he would journey that day to Jerusalem. His host answered that he had some affairs in the city, and proposed that they should go together.

Little Mary fluttered round the Guest showing him all her treasures,—bright beads that Martha had given because they were the most beautiful things in the mother's little

stock of treasures, a fine cotton veil threaded with silver, and some boxes scented with sweet spices to hold her amulets and rings.

"Mary loves those baubles," Martha explained indulgently, "I am always too busy for such things."

"Our Martha is old already," Lazarus said, smiling on her proudly, "and she is not yet thirteen. But I shall bring her something pretty from the bazaar in Jerusalem. Many caravans have come in for the feast bringing trinkets with which women love to deck themselves."

"Will not you bring me something also?" cried little Mary. But the Guest and her brother were busy with their sandals and making ready for the journey. Martha asked if His parents would return to Jerusalem that day. He replied that He did not expect them for two days yet, and she told Him to come back with Lazarus and be their Guest. He thanked her gravely. Little Mary was busy with her scarfs and her baubles and she gave the Guest only a

merry nod. With a grateful farewell to Martha and a long, penetrating look at Mary, the Boy went out with Lazarus and took the road which led to the City of David. That day and the next He passed in the Temple. When His parents returned to Jerusalem on the evening of the third day, they found Him there discoursing with the Doctors.

II

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me: he hath sent me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach a release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up. ***Isaias LXI—1***

And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet: and none of them were cleansed but Naaman the Syrian.

And all they in the synagogue, hearing these things, were filled with anger And they rose up and thrust him out of the city: and they brought him to the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them, went his way.— ***Saint Luke IV—27, 28, 29, 30.***

that wondrous scene, to permit its beauty to sink deep within His soul. "How beautiful, O my Father, hath Thou made the earth! In wisdom hast thou planned it all!"

But He went up quickly, for in his full strength the Man could outstrip the timorous Boy. He was soon past the flowery meadows, the waving grain fields, the vine-covered hills and had penetrated into the wilderness on the heights. Again He saw the wild pass of His dream, its desolation, its air of enfolding gloom. On the heights the remorseless sun of summer had killed the tender flowers, and scorched the very shrubs and straggling underwood.

The air stale, void of life, so utterly desolate that earth seemed like some forgotten planet, rolling purposeless in a waste of light. Even the birds had flown. Down below in the garden of nuts and in the vineyards, they warbled their sweet songs. But on the barren heights where the good things of life were lacking, they came not,

heedless that the Man of Sorrows pined for their solace. With a mourning heart He looked up to Heaven. A dull, ashen hue overspread the sun and the earth lay throbbing in the consuming heat. From the clouds no benign face looked down with compassion. He saw the Pine, indeed, its very shadow rested on Him and anguish oppressed His heart.

That night He slept again beside the Tree. Again all through the silent hours came the glorious pageant from the courts of Heaven. The angels bore lilies in their hands and sang glad songs. The fragrance of those beatific flowers, the sound of those melodious anthems, sank deep into the Man's soul to comfort and sustain Him against the days near at hand.

It was morning when He awoke. Again He took the downward path to the East and entered Bethania. The little home was trim and well cared for as in the past. The vines were on the trellis; the fig, the citron and the palm tree raised strong, vigorous

branches within the court. But Lazarus was not there to greet Him. Silently He entered the house. At first all was still but near the door which led into the garden He soon heard a sound of weeping. Moving softly He came upon Martha half kneeling, half reclining by the garden seat, her head upon her arms, her whole body shaking with emotion.

"What is it, little sister?" said the Man tenderly, laying His hand upon her head.

"My Friend, My Master," answered Martha, clinging to His knees, "my sister, my little Mary! Save her, bring her home. I sent you word when first she left us and I have waited for you long."

He bowed His head. Martha feeling no need of words, arose comforted, and began to prepare the meal. It was presently set before Him. While He ate, Lazarus came in, heavy-eyed, ill-clad, listless.

"You are ill," said the Man, gazing at his friend keenly. "Why are you troubled? Can you not trust Me? I have promised to

be your friend and Martha's and Mary's. You need nothing more."

When He had finished His repast He blessed them tenderly and went out of Bethania, "down into Capharnaum, a city of Galilee, and there He taught."

III

Jesus therefore six days before the Pasch came to Bethania, where Lazarus had been dead, whom Jesus raised to life.

And they made Him a supper there: and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them. . . .

Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of right spikenard, of great price, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.—Saint John XII—1, 2, 3.

IT was the day when the banquet had been prepared in the house of Simon the leper. The Master having come to Bethania in the early morning, sat with Martha and Mary in the little home which had grown so dear.

"Come, let us walk," said Lazarus, noting his Friend's pale face and the look of sadness in his eyes. "The air is heavy here and the idle speeches of the populace take all savor from it. We will go up into the hills and refresh ourselves."

A tender smile passed over the Master's countenance. He had taught Lazarus to read the face of nature and to understand the heavenly messages from the trees and flowers. Often they had walked the hills together but never before had they climbed those heights toward which the Master's feet now turned. Earth was soft and lovely, veiled in the vesture of Spring. Every-

where were the flowers, the birds and the butterflies and gaudy insects of the hills.

"How the birds sing!" exclaimed Lazarus, pausing to listen. "We have noticed how they flutter about when you are near. Mary says they never sang so sweetly before you came to Judea. Hear, the hillside is filled with melody."

The Master smiled but made no other reply. Lazarus walked on and was silent too. The fields of cummin waved before them. On the gentler slopes of the hill grew the wheat and the rye and the barley, and in every available spot the careful husbandman had trained his grapes. Over the ground the tender green of the cucumber vine was decked with yellow flowers and the gourd climbing on a broken wall threw fantastic shadows. Lazarus would have talked of things which he had heard from the Master's followers, things which oppressed his heart and filled the future with forebodings. But the Master's eyes held that seeing look,—that look of gazing on the

hidden scroll whereon the finger of God had traced mystic letters. Those who loved Him best never spoke when they saw that rapt expression. The hill broke into sharp, rough knolls and the barren rocks and prickly verdure made the ascent wearisome. Soon they came to the heights and near a cypress tall and upright as the Cedars of Lebanon, the Master said they would rest. Lazarus gladly consented, for he was still weak and his heart was torn with anxiety.

The Master leaned against the tree and began to speak softly of its beauty and how Isaias had held to scorn the idolaters who had put its noble branches to such ignoble usage. He loved to talk with Lazarus about the prophets. The grand music of their words, and their majestic images of nature filled His soul with refreshment. He repeated the praise which the Son of Sirach had bestowed upon the cypress, "which groweth up even to the clouds," and then, a note of sadness stealing in His voice, He added that the Gentiles made

coffins of cypress for their worthy men.

"It is a tree of sorrow and brings the thought of death—a tree planted by the tomb," said the Master, His eyes straying beyond the thorn bushes, where clear in view, against the ravine stood the Pine. As He spoke there arose on the air the sound of voices, and some woodmen rough and noisy came from the other side of the hill. The Master watched them intently. As the first strokes of the ax fell on the air, He leaned toward His friend:

"Come, let us go. They are felling the Tree."

Lazarus knowing that the Master's heart was full of compassion for every growing thing, believed only that He pitied the doomed Pine. He took up the staff and they began to descend. For many paces, echoed the rude laugh of the woodmen, the sound of the ax—then the crash of the Tree.

The Master's face was lined with anguish. Lazarus gazed on Him appalled. They

stopped at the first door and craved a gourd of water from a little child playing near. The Master drank deeply and blessing the child, passed on. Without a glance towards the darkening heights He walked rapidly back to Bethania and with His friend went to the house where the banquet had been prepared.

Six days after this last journey to the hills, the Master crossed the Brook of Cedron with His disciples, and went into the Garden. Under the glory of the Paschal moon it lay calm and holy. The cedars reared lofty branches and the olives gleamed silver white. Aloes filled the air with perfume and the golden heart of the lily throbbed in a chalice of snow. The rose of Sharon bloomed as when Solomon sang her praises and all about were the flowers He knew and loved. The Master's eye rested on the scene and read the cryptic meaning. "A garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up. Thy plants are a paradise of pomegranates with the fruits of the orchard.

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Cyprus with spikenard. Spikenard and saffron, sweet cane and cinnamon, with all the trees of Libanus, myrrh and aloes with all the chief perfumes." * He saw the end of the drama when the timorous disciple would bring a wealth of aromatic gum and sweet spices.

When He had talked with those clustered about Him, He went forward to pray. The compassionate eyes of Jesus looked on earth's beauty no more. That night in the Garden, the olive leaves drooped down to comfort, the lily wept, the rose turned pale with anguish. But after the Angel bearing the chalice had sped down the luminous way, His eyes saw only the Divine.

* Canticle of Canticles iv, 12, 13, 14.